

Testimony to the Aging Committee**Submitted by Mary Tibbals, Public Policy Manager, Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter****Thursday, February 25, 2016****S.B. No. 165: An Act Expanding Eligibility for the Alzheimer's Disease Respite Care Program**

Dear Senator Flexer, Representative Serra and distinguished members of the Aging Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. No. 165: An Act Expanding Eligibility for the Alzheimer's Disease Respite Care Program.

My name is Mary Tibbals and I am the Public Policy Manager for the Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter. The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support to all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Alzheimer's disease is the 6th leading cause of death and among the top 10 in America that cannot be prevented, cured or even slowed. There are 73,000 Connecticut residents 65 and older living with Alzheimer's disease. By 2025, this number is projected to increase to an estimated 91,000 resulting in a 25% increase of older adults living with the disease.

Alzheimer's takes a devastating toll, not just on those with the disease but also on their caregivers. In 2014, 177,000 Connecticut caregivers provided a total of 201 million hours of unpaid care to those with Alzheimer's and other dementia – care valued at \$2.4 billion.

Sixty percent of Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers rate the emotional stress of caregiving as high or very high; and 40% suffer from depression. Due to the long duration of the disease and the intense care needs, the physical and emotional toll on caregivers living in Connecticut resulted in them having \$139 million in higher health costs of their own in 2014.

The Statewide Respite Care Program

The Statewide Respite Care Program provides resources such as individualized care planning, support and services that help caregivers maintain the independence, safety and welfare of their loved ones affected by Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. Access to adult day care, home health aide, homemaker/companion and other supportive programs decreases isolation that can lead to depression and other health disparities. This cost avoidance service allows affected individuals to remain in their homes and communities as long as possible and saves the state millions of dollars as compared to the Medicaid costs spent for nursing home care.

The Association supports the expansion of eligibility to the Alzheimer's respite care programs due to the prevalence of the disease and projected increase of individuals that will develop the disease by 2025. An increase in the eligibility would qualify and support a greater number of caregivers that are experiencing compromised health conditions created or aggravated by the long duration, emotional stress and intense

physical demands of their caregiving responsibilities. Also, it would allow caregivers, who are struggling to maintain employment due to going in late, leaving early or taking time off, to remain in the work place. By expanding the eligibility to the respite care program, caregivers can continue to work and maintain an income that provides for their own basic necessities, reduces the loss in work related income and their own long term benefits, and supports their ability to pay for the increasing expenses of long term care for their loved one. Lastly, it allows individuals with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias to remain in a safe, appropriate, and personally preferred community setting longer, delaying the entry into more costly state funded long term care programs.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and encourage you to support S.B. No. 165: An Act Expanding Eligibility for the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program.

Please feel free to contact me at mtibbals@alz.org or (860) 828-2828 with any questions.

2015 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report at alz.org/facts.